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## MODERN WORK EXECUTED BY THE GOBELINS

THE full page illustrations of Gobelin tapestry in the preceding pages give examples of the work of this famous manufactory up to the close of the eighteenth century. The Gobelin works still are in active operation. The oval tapestry which heads the preceding article, and the "Vase de Marbre" opposite this page, are from designs by P.V. Galland and represent work being done by the Gobelins at the present day, when there has been, after a period of decadence during the nineteenth century, a marked revival of the artistic spirit of earlier days. Mr. W. Francklyn Paris, an Honorary Fellow for Life of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who is preparing an elaborate article on the Gobelins as they are today and has secured from the French Government a large number of beautiful photographs of modern tapestries made by the Gobelins, courteously has placed these two illustrations at the disposal of THE LOTUS.

The past production of the Gobelin looms easily falls under five distinct periods. First come all works executed at this manufactory before it was established as a Crown industry in 1662. During this preliminary period the work which was produced was of an excellent quality and was based upon cartoons specially designed for tapestry by Rubens and many other of the great artists of the day.

The next period is that of the reign of Louis XIV, when several of the most famous sets of tapestry were produced, chiefly after designs by Charles Le

Brun. Besides "The Elements," from which set an example has been reproduced as a frontispiece to the preceding article, there were the important sets of "The History of the King" and "The Months, or the Royal Mansions," sets which were designed and woven in glorification of Louis XIV, whose strong personality dominated the entire period.

Owing to the Royal finances being in a low state, the Gobelin works were closed, officially speaking, from 1694 to 1699, but weavers continued to work there by permission of the King. The eighteenth century ushers in the third period of the Gobelins, and is a period of exceptionally brilliant artistic achievement. It is especially noted for the richness and novelty used in the models for the series of the "Portières des Dieux" and the "History of Don Quixote," "still famous among the most beautiful designs of the eighteenth century;" and during the second period of that century, for "The Story of Esther" and "The Story of Jason" after Troy; the "Scènes de Théâtre," after Charles Coypel, and most famous of all the tapestries of Boucher.

These Boucher tapestries may be said to mark the climax of eighteenth century achievement on the part of Gobelins. But they introduced the custom of substituting picture models for especially designed cartoons, a custom which led inevitably to the fifth period—the period of decadence, from the French Revolution throughout the nineteenth century.

It is with reason however, that the



Le Vase de Marbre  
By P. V. Galland

French claim for the present century an artistic renaissance of the work of the Gobelins under the directorship of M. Guiffrey. Some ten years ago a beautiful panel was made there, from a design by François Ehrmann, for the Galerie Mazarin, in the National Library, Paris; and a tribute to "Colbert" from the design of J. P. Laurens, was exhibited in the Salon. This piece of work measured about 247 square feet, was the largest panel woven at the factory for several centuries, and required four years to weave, considered a short time for the work, as a skilled weaver produces only about three square yards of tapestry a year, according to Gobelin records.

Although the Gobelins are in operation at the present day, and indeed have been in operation since the re-opening of the works in 1699; they do not accept private orders, for work on these would have to be suspended, whenever an order was received from the Government. Consequently no time could be set for the completion of a private commission.

Owing to an almost incredible act of vandalism, the collection of antique Gobelin tapestries belonging to the French Government does not even equal one-third the number of those stored in the manufactory of the Gobelins at the death of Louis XIV. At the time of the French Revolution not

only was it found almost impossible to continue the work, the number of weavers being reduced from 3,000 to 45, but in 1793 Augustin Belle, director of the works at that time, ordered the destruction by burning of all pieces illustrative of kingly glory, feudal authority, or, indeed, any anti-revolutionary subject. Again in 1794, twelve fine panels nearing completion on the looms were destroyed, because their subject was displeasing to the opinion of the moment. In 1796 the State paid off 574,000 francs of public debt in tapestry. To cap the climax, on representation of workmen at the factory, the Directoire government decided, in 1797, that profit could be made by abstracting for separate sale the gold and silver with which much of the tapestry was resplendent; and in order to extract the metal from the gold and silver threads, they destroyed 184 magnificent hangings. A year later, a sale of the Gobelin tapestry was held at the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris to procure money for the payment of salaries over-due to officials. Owing to these acts of vandalism and inartistic folly, of the 2,648 tapestry panels catalogued as stored in the Gobelin manufactory at the end of the reign of Louis XIV (not to mention those produced and added to the store after that date) only about 700 are now in possession of the French government.